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TELECENTRES: ONE-STOP LEARNING HUBS IN RURAL BANGLADESH

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Telecentres: One-stop learning hubs in rural Bangladesh

Abstract

In rural areas in Bangladesh, local ICT resource centres, usually called telecentres, have the potential of bringing the benefits of new communication technologies to rural people who do not otherwise have access to technology in their homes, through their work place or at an educational institution. The potential learning impact of telecentres relates to providing information in domains related to the daily life of citizens, such as agriculture, health, e-governance, employment, etc., and furthermore to the role of access to both information and ICT as a means of empowerment. Among other things, ICT offers an opportunity to promote the informal and non-formal learning processes which are connected to empowerment and rural development, and to build social networks among people.

Through a case study conducted in rural areas in Bangladesh, this paper reports on the learning processes related to people's use of a telecentre. Based on interviews and observation data, the paper describes and discusses the motivation of local users, the learning strategies they apply, and the importance of free access to both technology and information. These observations are discussed within the conceptual framework of communities of practice (Wenger 1998). Based on the findings, factors of importance in relation to the learning potential of community telecentres are discussed in the light of an information chain-model (Heeks 2005).